

O L I V E
L E T
L C

misunderstandings



COLLECTIVE MISUNDERSTANDINGS

17 JANUARY - 08 FEBRUARY 2015 MISSION GALLERY - SWANSEA

Since 2008, a collection of artists in Wales have joined other artists across the world to celebrate the birth of art, as suggested by Robert Filliou in 1963. This date is the 17th of January, and in 2015 Art was, by Filliou's calculation, 1,000,052 years old.

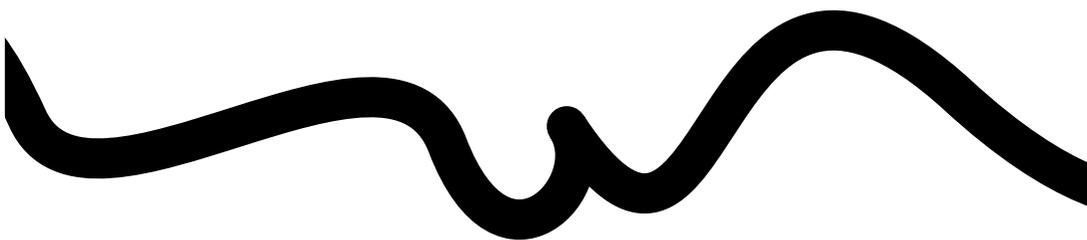
In 2014, the initiative "Art's Birthday Wales" invited ATB to explore notions of Utopia in advance of the 500 year anniversary of Thomas More's novel of the same name. The idea of utopia as a wider topic became our central theme in creating the work, research, environment and events.

This research and dialogue would culminate in an exhibition and a series of workshops at Mission Gallery, Swansea - a former non-denominational chapel and refuge, built for visiting sailors in the docks of the city. The building is a stone chapel with a central apse, framed by a tall archway, and high curved ceiling, a religious architectural presence of performativity, in which a sense of history and hierarchy remain tangible.

A research visit by ATB to Wales in 2014 produced four newsletters containing texts, images, readings and other research materials connected to Utopia and collaboration. ATB invited Arts Birthday Wales to become part of the collective, expanding the idea of collaboration and hosting from a curator artist role to a more inclusive and expansive process of work. In January 2015 all the group members gathered in Swansea, for a month developing the exhibition in and around the gallery. This was a process of co-living, cooking; working towards an event as well as developing a series of workshops.

An immediate response to the gallery was a need to alter the architectural experience, to move from a familiarity, or an imbedded hierarchy or unconscious gaze and to offer a new sense of space, which was fluid and adaptable. Working with the concept of 'soft architecture' an installation of long curtained walls divided the space into a series of small rooms and pockets, which could then be removed, altered and exposed. Printing, making and preparing this scenography was a collective undertaking with curtains needing to be 6 meters in height to reach the floor creating large walls of fabric decorated with prints and images from the utopia research.

Adapting the space sculpturally and architecturally, creating a social space, performing a poem dressed as Thomas More through clouds of smoke, cooking seaweed for exhibition visitors, the space became a shifting and changing context for group work. The groups



perception goes beyond seeing an exhibition as an opening and the representation of their work/creative capital. The members also spent time in the space in order to discuss the work and develop and change the work as an ongoing process.

Workshops and talks related to the exhibition included bringing

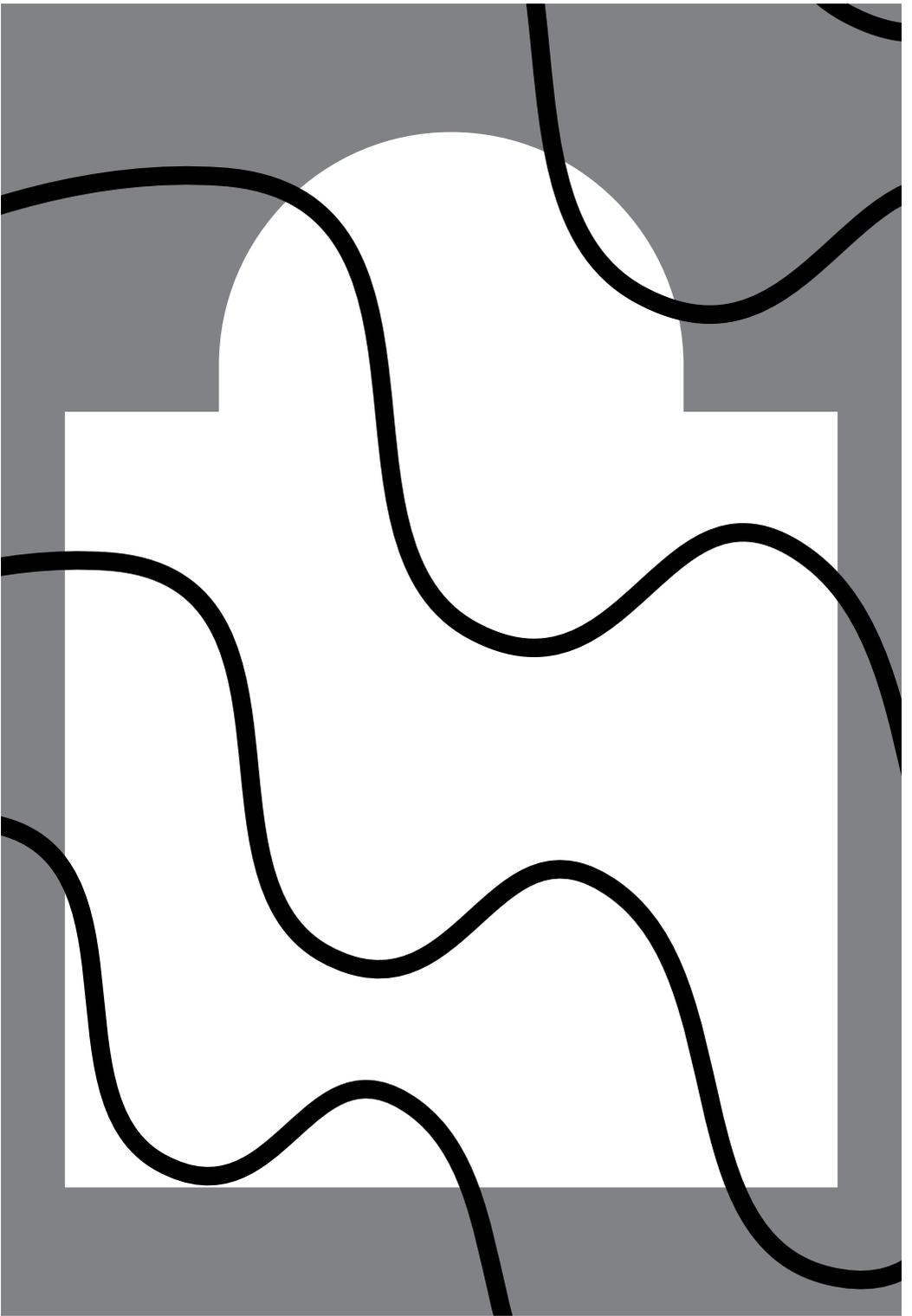
Anna Davin and Howard Slater together to talk about 'utopian' education in a 'grounding'. Ernst Bloch, singing the Big Rock Candy Mountain and extracts from News from Nowhere by William Morris were read, shared and discussed, all to a soundtrack of Burl Ives, Don Cherry and cries of 'Hang the Jerk who invented

work!'. Iain Boal's talk related to the history of the communes, the commons and the ideas of utopian collectivity, which emerged in California during the 1960s. From Thomas More, Gwyn Williams and Raymond Williams to Lou Gottlieb and the Morning Star Ranch, the Diggers at Golden Gate park, the San Francisco Mime troupe and the Black Panthers.

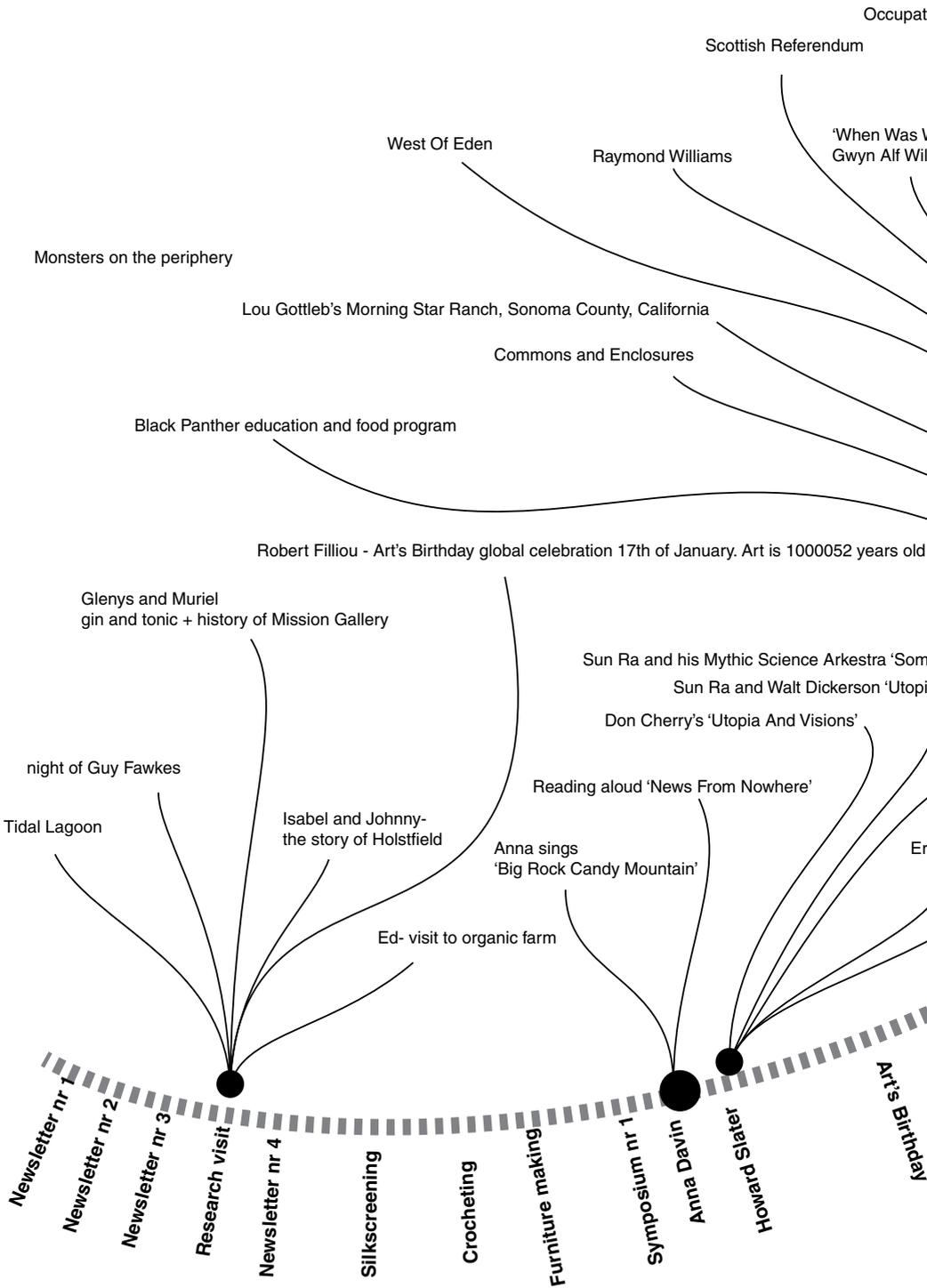
Workshops with students from Swansea College of Art, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, included collective reading of Queer Phenomenology by Sara Ahmed, learning to make rugs and simple weaving techniques. The city was also explored and recorded through psychogeographical walks, and dérives.

The elements and tools developed whilst together are dormant - packed, reworked, recycled but the conversation and context shifts to a new focus ...informed by the research and the richness of time spent together ATB continues to work collectively with no necessary public conclusion but a series of moments mapped.

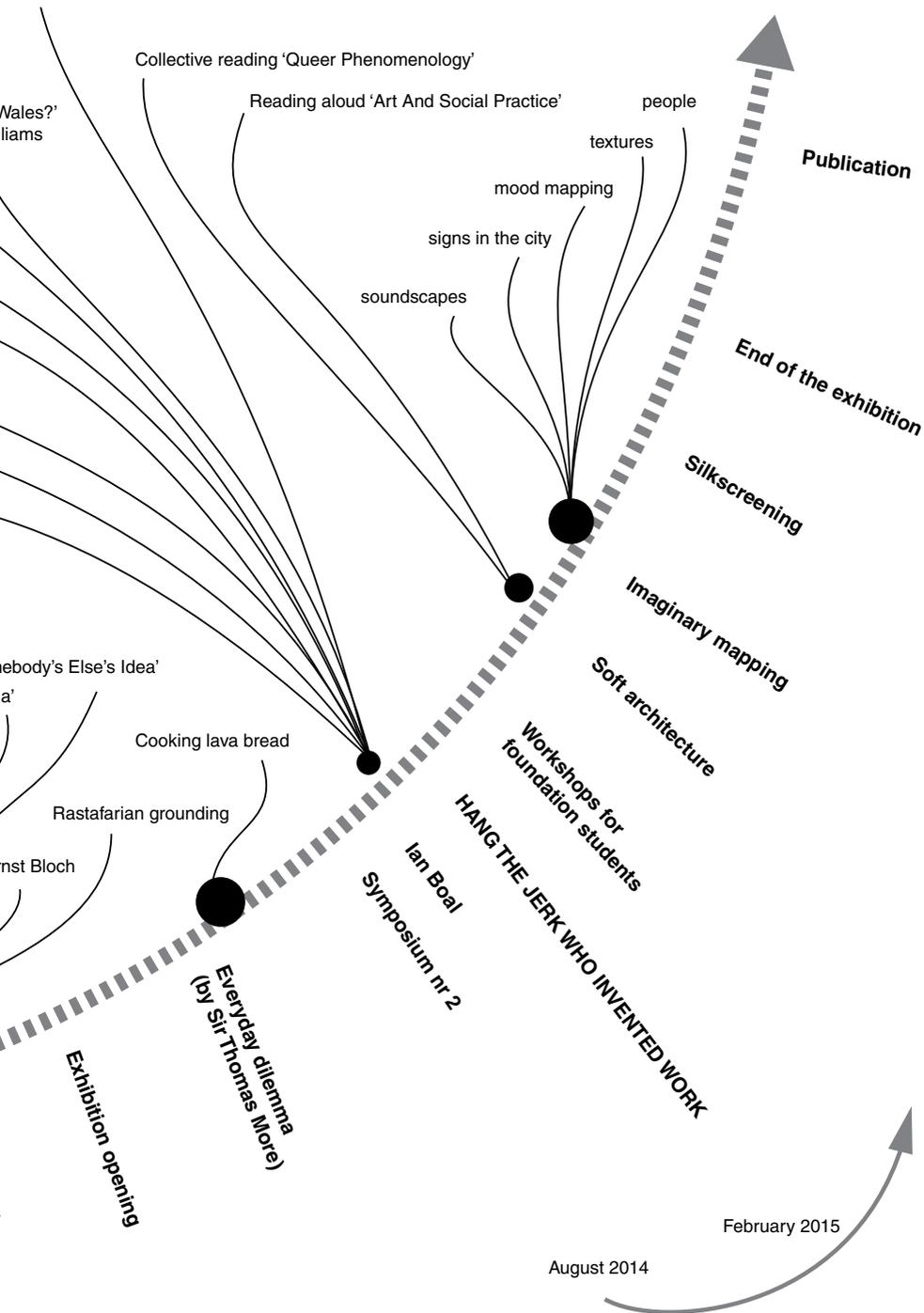
'grounding' is an open ended terms used by Rastafarians to describe impromptu and unscheduled meetings. It is a space of reflection, an informal space for discussion ('reasoning'), for an exchange of ideas in a non-competitive, a non-didactic environment.







ion of Alcatraz by Native Americans



“Love, which is so useless today, will thus become one of the most brilliant main-springs of the social mechanism”

The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier, Jonathan Beecher & Richard Bienvenu red., p. 327

“The ‘heart’ as lived is strangely different from the heart as thought and perceived.” Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, p. 40

For this text, we begin with a blank sheet. In fact, the sheet is a blank document on my screen. The emptiness of content must have content inserted, and I am the person who can fill this empty space out. Therefore, the empty sheet is always a catalyser for me to start writing. As I am writing this, I do realise the fact that ‘I am sure this sheet is actually empty’ is a preconceived idea, which I have from a certain context and history.

Henri Lefebvre tells a story of 13th century Tuscany. It begins with the way how the bourgeoisie transformed the countryside in a dialectical development between the country and town. At this time, the bourgeois in Tuscany was, according to Lefebvre, an “urban oligarchy of merchant and burghers”. Among others, they organised domestic production for the town in the nearby countryside where the producers were ‘métayers’, farmers who received a share of what they produced. Meanwhile, the town bourgeois were too the main developers of space. Since they had an interest in the production of the *mésayers*, they constructed a specific type of built farmland in the empty fields of the countryside for the *mésayers* to live and work in. These constructions were very much based on symmetry and had the horizontal line as their conceptual starting points. As Lefebvre notes, these built spaces were introduced to the places where they were situated with the interest of increasing production. As this happened, a concept for designing architecture and urban environments emerged: “...artists ‘discovered’ perspective and developed the theory of it because a space in perspective lay before them...” Lefebvre continues: “Out of this process emerged, then, a new representation of space: the visual perspective shown in the works of painters and given form first by architects and later by geometers. Knowledge emerged from a practice, and elaborated upon it by means of formalization and the application of a logical order.” And: “The point is merely that some artists and men of learning arrived at a very different representation of space: a homogeneous, clearly demarcated space complete with horizon and vanishing-point.”

history is felt and reproduced by me and my conception of a blank sheet, an empty document, and an abstract space of ideas for the empty document is a constructed idea (the same goes for the role of the ‘artist’ and the ‘learned man’ as the person to fill out the ‘empty space’). It has its beginning with something similar to streamlining of space in order to accumulate the production of food. The cross-role of food producers and urban developers gave that bourgeoisie in Tuscany (and elsewhere) at that time a unique opportunity to come up with a way to control their production, thus their oligarchic state. They came up with a form of abstract space that in a way has defined how urban spaces today are developed – the control of space is a control of production and desire at the same time.

The legacy is the horizontal line, the idea of looking at a space as a blank sheet, an empty space. The first line is always given. This has gone a long way up through modernism and into the computer software of architects in contemporary design and urban planning. The idea of modernist housing blocks, as seen in suburban developments in most of the world, is conceived of as an empty space – the pre-spaces of the neighbourhoods are usually completely reformed to fit the massive housing blocks and their infrastructure. Furthermore, the concept of living of these blocks does something similar, by preconceiving the way of people’s life in general; in a sense, totally ignoring that people (might) live diverse lives. With the goal of minimum sustenance for each individual, the apartments and outdoor, shared spaces of these blocks are designed to keep people alive, not living their lives. Following the tradition of mixed streamlined production and life through constructed space, these developments follow the movement of the

All quotes and references in this paragraph are from: Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 78-79

horizontal line: horizontally running over everything that is living. Such a space is an abstract space, which is a tool of domination and which destroys “differences that show signs of developing, in order to

Henri Lefebvre, *impose an abstract homogeneity*”.

The Production of Space, p. 370
However, is the horizontal line really the first step? Does every space not already have a social dimension?

Lefebvre comes to this point. Would we come to the same point when we imagine a change of a given space? Or if we imagine a completely new space, a Utopia, do we then wipe out a social space of our own imagination?

Approximately two hundred years after the tale of Tuscany took place, Thomas More wrote his Utopia, forming a way of imagining not only space but also complete worlds. This feeds our imaginary muscles today, as well as the fantasies of utopian writers up until now. Another utopian writer, Charles Fourier, had many ideas of streamlining as well. He did not name it so, but he did look at preindustrial civilisation as a very inefficient way of producing. First of all, he was sure that he had discovered the secret of passionate attraction between people, to him something like a natural law like gravity. Secondly, he did not see the reason to fragmentise social reproduction. Out of this came the concept of the Phalanxes – baroque, symmetrical housing blocks that were spread out in the countryside. See a similarity to something previously described? Fourier thought of a very detailed system for passionate productive life. There is no work without passion, and no moment where every single person’s passion is not streamlined with their activity. Here, restrictions to

All references in this paragraph are from: *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier*, Jonathan Beecher & Richard Bienvenu red. desires must be sought extin-

guished. To him, this is a high priority; it goes over other priorities such as technological progress.

Thus, in my opinion, Fourier’s Phalanxes does not only resemble the production-streamlining process, started in Lefebvre’s Tuscany story, going to the industrialized factory,

on to the modernist housing unit. It also gives me a resembling feeling towards the 60’s and 70’s drop-out communes. When state modernism found that dense living and fragmented lives could indeed go hand in hand in a period of extensive boredom – productive streamlining here worked both at work and at home. It seems like a fair response to drop out from this situation and thought. On the other hand, perhaps the legacy of the horizontal line was not washed away in the drop-out experiments, as so many other concepts of living were sometimes brutally removed in order to get in with passionate love and new ways of communal living. Perhaps this somehow brutal washing away of a social and emotional landscape in order to start everything anew was coming directly from the hands of the 13th century architects as they drew the first line, horizontally going over houses, people, animals, bacteria, entire ecosystems and social spaces in order to wipe them out for the sake of, in this case, a streamlined life (of free love). At the same time, both the drop-outers and Fourier seem to agree that love is important, and irrational. Fourier said:

“Today young people disdain manias because to indulge in them is to invite ridicule. People forget that love is the domain of unreason...” Still we all indulge in

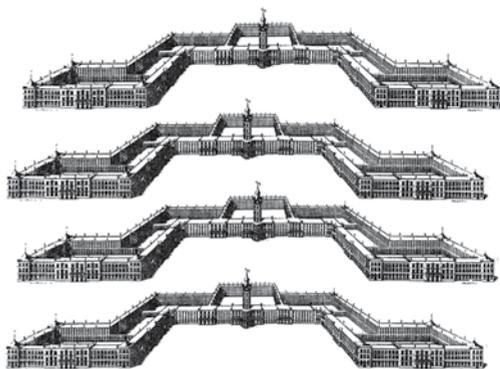
Reference: Institute for Precarious Consciousness, *Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It is Effectively Preventing Militancy*, and *One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It*, found in the Danish translation in *Brud 1 & 2*

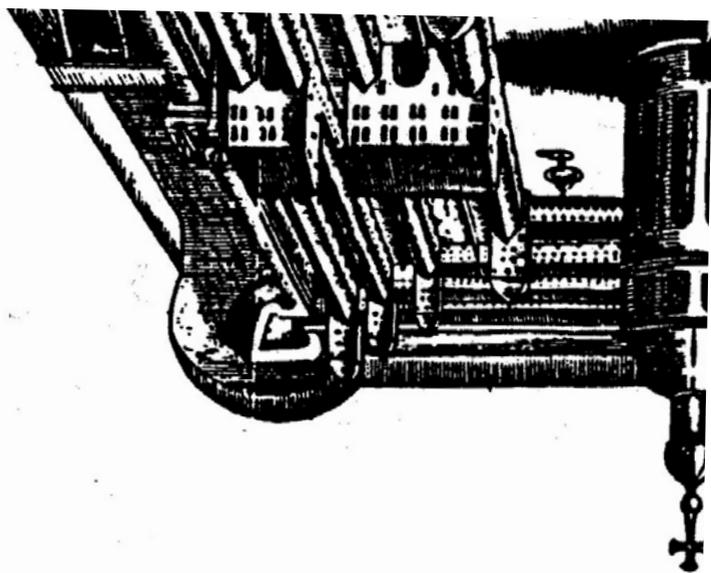
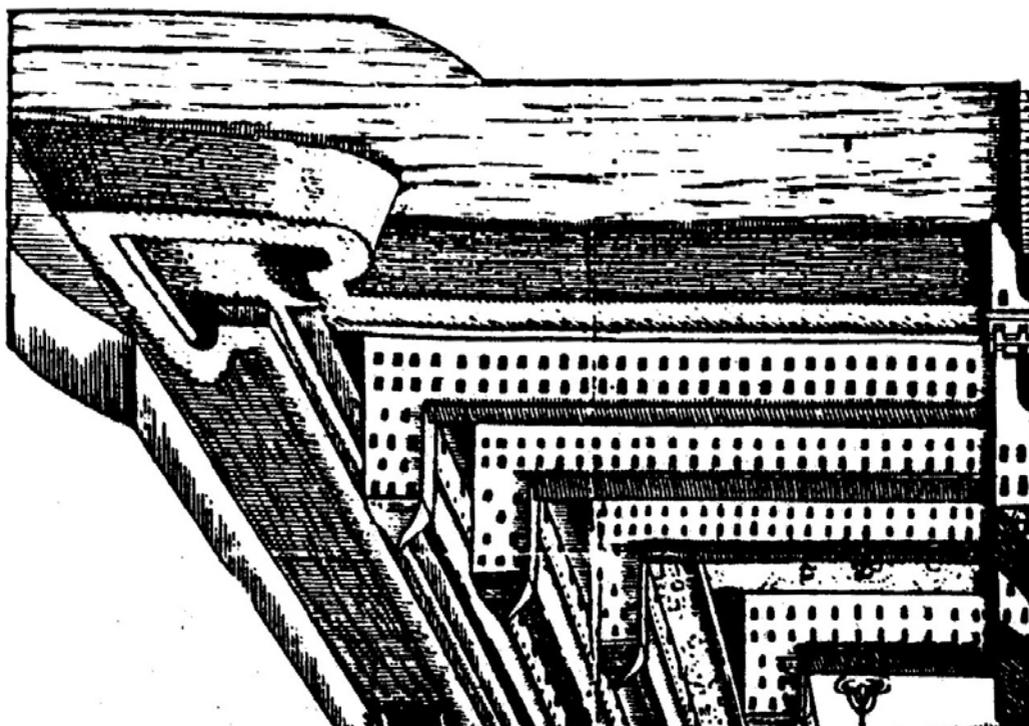
The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier, Jonathan Beecher & Richard Bienvenu red., p. 349

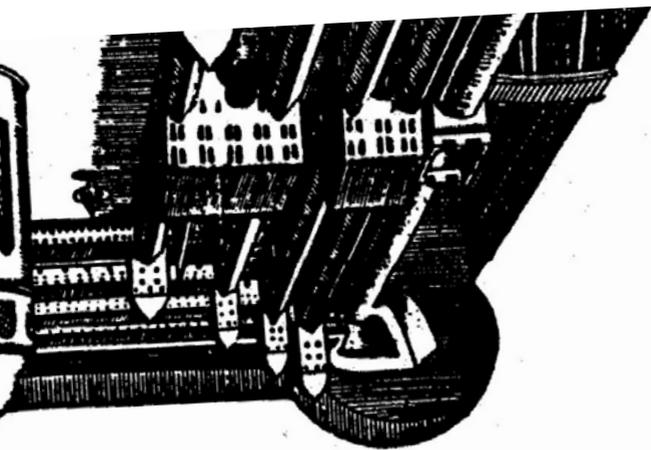
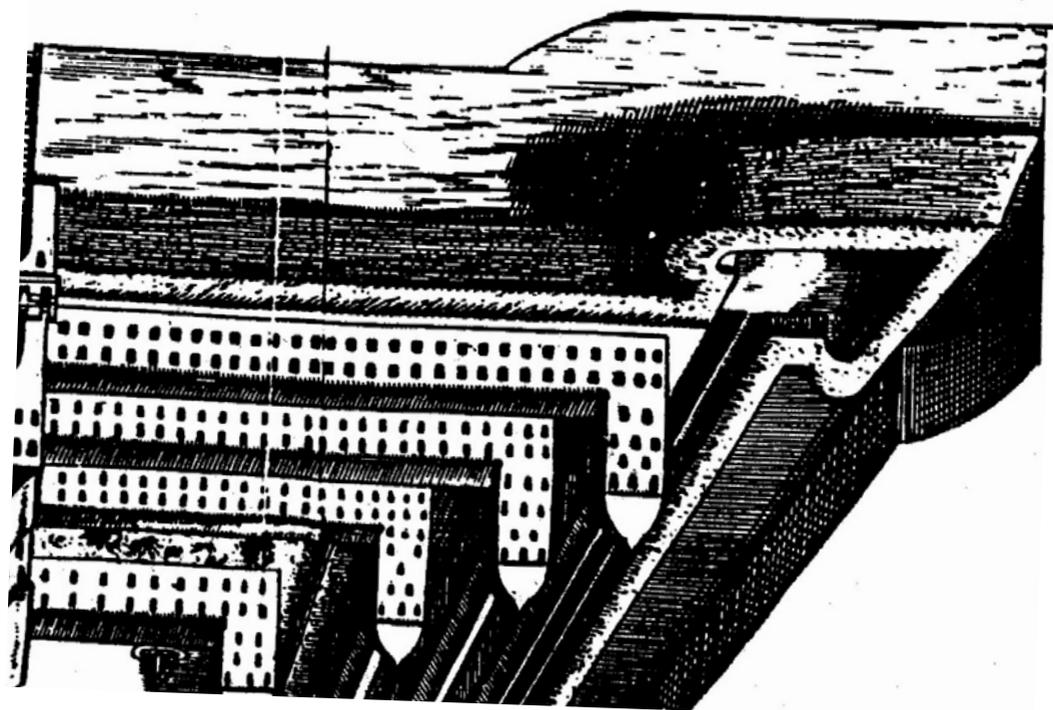
a rationalistic mania of planning from a blank sheet, a straight line, an empty space. We insist that there is nothing before we start creating. It is a matter of perspective: how close you zoom in on things. The horizontal line only appears a straight line from a far distance. In the same way will a zooming in on every straight line in any circumstance make the line seem less straight at a certain point. Actually, all lines are curled and weird, in fact they are not really lines when one gets close enough. If you look around you, how many actual 'lines' do you see? It is like this everywhere, except in the vector driven software of contemporary architects and urban planners. Here the lines remain straight no matter how much is zoomed in on them. When a line is drawn, it is an actual line, a border by definition. Where does this leave architectural work in relation to lived life? Perhaps a little zooming in on the horizon, in terms of moving one's body, would help. Then it is not only blindness or ignorance, for when Fourier's passionate community of Harmony, the Phalanxes, becomes problematic is when asking the question: whose passion? As I imagine the realisation of Fourier's detailed Utopia, it becomes clear to me that he has not given himself a role in it because his role is that of the architect's – a passionate architect or a planner of passions. Even though I can relate to many of Fourier's thoughts and ideas, as dissident to modern rationality and enlightenment, it still seems to me that when a preconceived idea is moved from the mind of one thinker to be lived by a group of people, reality becomes different. The same happens when a master plan exits its software and goes into actualization. Sometimes ideas become just too real when realized, too overruling, and what role does an imaginary mind play then?

In this sense, Utopia could not have one single author. To me it is a shared experience all the way through. Our lived life experience makes spaces of difference, difference to overcome estrangement to the other. It is a lived experience too, not able to become a preconceived, fixed space in any sense. This demands sensitivity towards how ideas are realized and a sensibility in relation to the power of the idea-makers – this can only happen in process, in situation. Therefore, we play Utopia, go on walks and eat Utopia communally as a flavour in the soup. The passionate organisation of the Phalanx will become in our intestines as we digest and salute. No line is a line, and no space can be said to be empty. "I shall also take the liberty to switch between 'I' and 'we' as I please."

Anna Ørberg,
Deviations, Island of Open Process, ATB











M
ple
spea
everyb
Unable t
it remains
on a cruise-
boat. We misu
rections, we mi

These creases and folds distorted our view, inverted our perspective, arriving nor leaving. Inhabiting the grey-zones, impossible to leave. A bottom up boat – overturned by desire. Deliberate misunderstandings. Conclusions non-existing, story never ending, a bottom up boat never done. Walls consisting of rhythm and words along with time, moving and awaiting, extremely indecisive, it will never make sense. endless trolling, it will not be defined.

Its structure composed of feelings and process, present and absent, answering, always open, never alone. We are layers and layers and much more. Multiple voices, an excess of meaning. A bottom up boat shipwrecked on a rock. Creases and folds. Deviations occurred, the folds of confusion led us to the shore. Time and the wind. A bottom up boat constituted by time, rhythmic, fragile and flexible as it is we are nowhere and everywhere. cannot end. Its folds are innumerable, myriads of layers. another question to ask. Creases and folds of time, a dialectic of confusions, both a hat and a boat. We interpreted the map. Deliberate misunderstandings.

Multi-
voices
k this text in
ody's English.
to be proofread
a fool, a fool
ship, a bottom up
understood the di-
sinterpreted the map.

otive and overturned our ship. Stranded we are on the shore, neither
ocate. Not conclusive, indecisive, rather floating, except it is not.
nderstandings, those are the best.

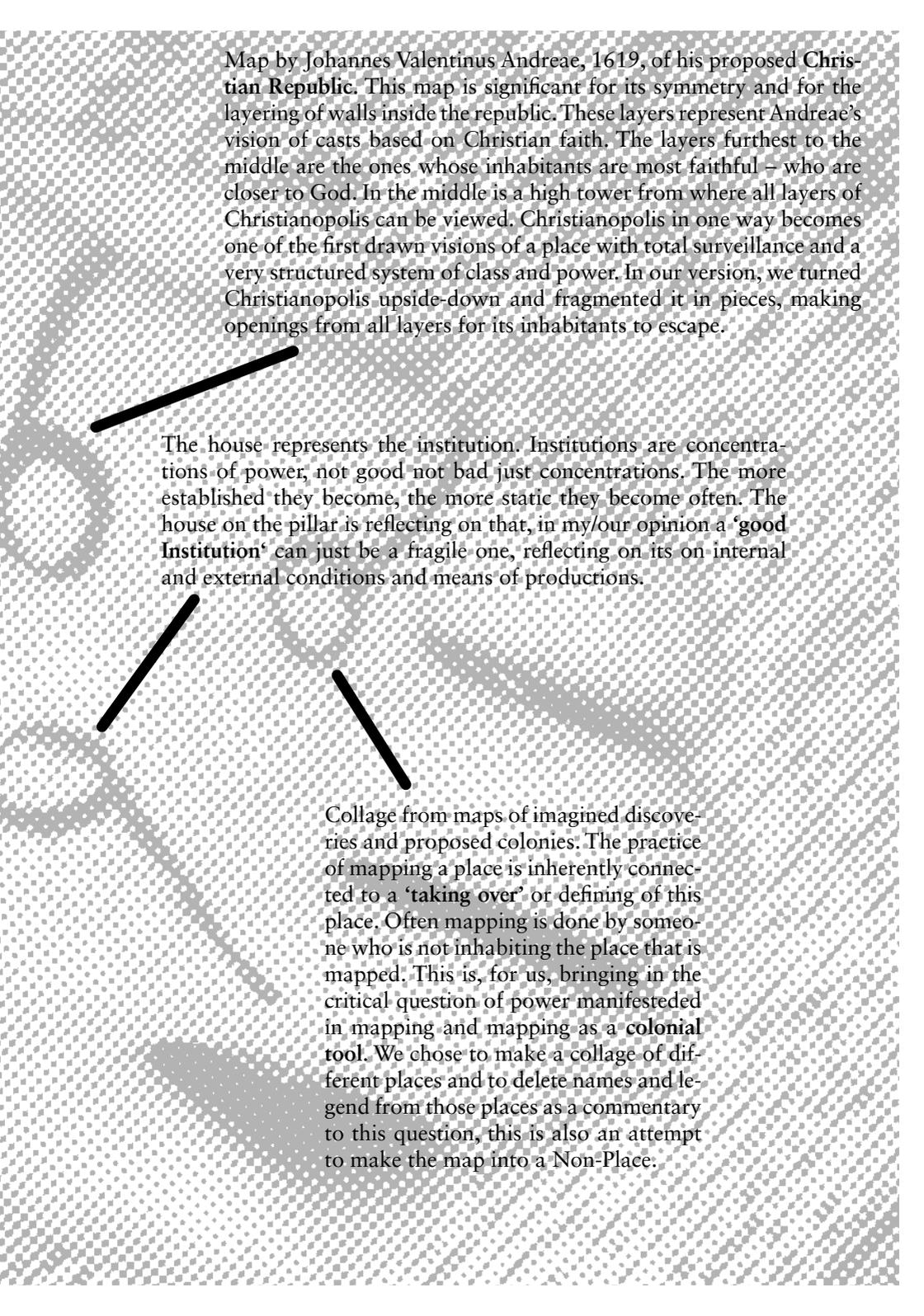
boat overturned by our bodies. We did it on purpose, it had to be
he bodies that shape its hull. Neither staying nor leaving, obser-
ke up its mind. A never-ending story, conclusions are so boring,

nce is crucial, we're all in the text. Posing questions, rarely
and creases and folds in a text that is also a boat and a hat
nings, collective misunderstandings interwoven like a rug.
s and folds, those are the layers that constitute a float.
s here. Routes are visible only until they are erased by
es our portable home. A geography of paper and fab-
and everywhere all at once. It does not end, this text
ds of creases, it does not end here. There's always
takes us back and forth between sea and land, a
boat. We misunderstood the directions, we misin-
tandings, those are the best.

This is a map of a group of people in an intimate form of **group process**. It shows simply how structures and boundaries can become a collective grid in-between the entities of this group. This grid can happen both when the group has a spoken agreement and as an underlying, unspoken, factor between the members of the group.

We collaged a piece of sir Francis Bacons utopia, New Atlantis (1627), onto the **Sinclair C5**. Bacon focused in his utopian vision on human inventions and discoveries. In the image is seen a landscape of humans working, inventing and discovering. This is for us resembling the idea of the future in the Sinclair C5 of human life becoming ever more fast, flexible, painless and smooth. The irony here is that even though one imagines a smooth future one still has to deal with a present full of frictions, this and the limits of one's own imagination that is so deeply rooted in the present. If it is possible to accelerate time, is it then possible to jump ahead?

This is a drawing of the buildings from Charles Fourier's vision of Phalansteries. A utopic space where **work and desire** are intimately connected. Fourier is known as one of the early socialist-utopian thinkers. The phalansteries were, in his vision, dwellings for people. As buildings, they have a very baroque look, when copied next to each other, they even come to resemble the modernist housing blocks from the 50's and up. Can desire be planned?



Map by Johannes Valentinus Andreae, 1619, of his proposed **Christian Republic**. This map is significant for its symmetry and for the layering of walls inside the republic. These layers represent Andreae's vision of casts based on Christian faith. The layers furthest to the middle are the ones whose inhabitants are most faithful – who are closer to God. In the middle is a high tower from where all layers of Christianopolis can be viewed. Christianopolis in one way becomes one of the first drawn visions of a place with total surveillance and a very structured system of class and power. In our version, we turned Christianopolis upside-down and fragmented it in pieces, making openings from all layers for its inhabitants to escape.

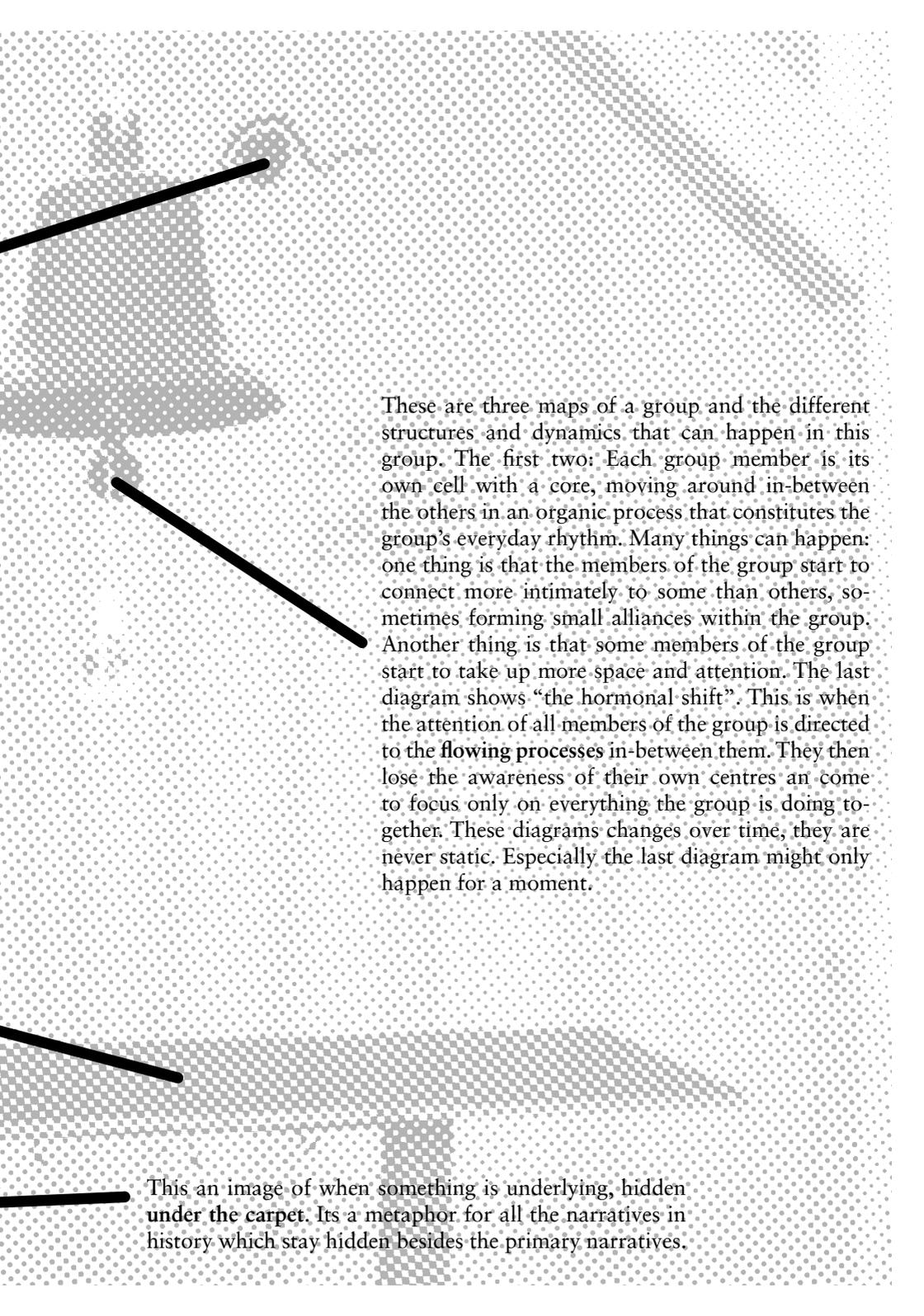
The house represents the institution. Institutions are concentrations of power, not good not bad just concentrations. The more established they become, the more static they become often. The house on the pillar is reflecting on that, in my/our opinion a **'good Institution'** can just be a fragile one, reflecting on its on-internal and external conditions and means of productions.

Collage from maps of imagined discoveries and proposed colonies. The practice of mapping a place is inherently connected to a **'taking over'** or defining of this place. Often mapping is done by someone who is not inhabiting the place that is mapped. This is, for us, bringing in the critical question of power manifested in mapping and mapping as a **colonial tool**. We chose to make a collage of different places and to delete names and legend from those places as a commentary to this question, this is also an attempt to make the map into a Non-Place.

This chicken is a map called “The Permaculture Chicken”. Permaculture is a **design system** that seeks to create a world where humans are working with nature (not against it) in a very conscious, rational way. For example, this map shows all the input and outputs a chicken would have in a permaculture design of, say, a farm. In one way it is showing how the chicken connects to the design, but also how everything connects to each other in the whole. We split the chicken up and turned some pieces around here. This is in order to address the problem of the type of planning that tries to foretell all actions by living beings. What is the free will of the chicken, how can it express itself here?

The image of a process that is so careful that even when the **spoon** is digging, instead of eating, it is dug by another spoon, and then another spoon, and then another spoon. A sort of endless chain reflecting and questioning the now.

The **triangle** refers to an idea of the Philosopher Walter Benjamin. In his writings on history he talks about a specific weaving technique called Kairos. In this technique a finished carpet get refurbished with golden strings, little spots of the carpet get reopened in a triangle shape and the golden string pierces trough. This is a metaphor to Benjamins ideas about history, history is an already finished carpet and the golden strings are revolutionary moments that can open reopen history and make change happen.



These are three maps of a group and the different structures and dynamics that can happen in this group. The first two: Each group member is its own cell with a core, moving around in-between the others in an organic process that constitutes the group's everyday rhythm. Many things can happen: one thing is that the members of the group start to connect more intimately to some than others, sometimes forming small alliances within the group. Another thing is that some members of the group start to take up more space and attention. The last diagram shows "the hormonal shift". This is when the attention of all members of the group is directed to the **flowing processes** in-between them. They then lose the awareness of their own centres and come to focus only on everything the group is doing together. These diagrams change over time, they are never static. Especially the last diagram might only happen for a moment.

This is an image of when something is underlying, hidden under the carpet. It's a metaphor for all the narratives in history which stay hidden besides the primary narratives.

*/There is an idea and a way to let it out
//Halfway between gesture and thought*

*/They fall into each other as everything flattens
 /My paradise is tall piles of slime like houses
/They oscillate in my skull all day as in my sleep without a stop
 /As if my only solution is to become mad to the rest of the world
 //Halfway between gesture and thought*

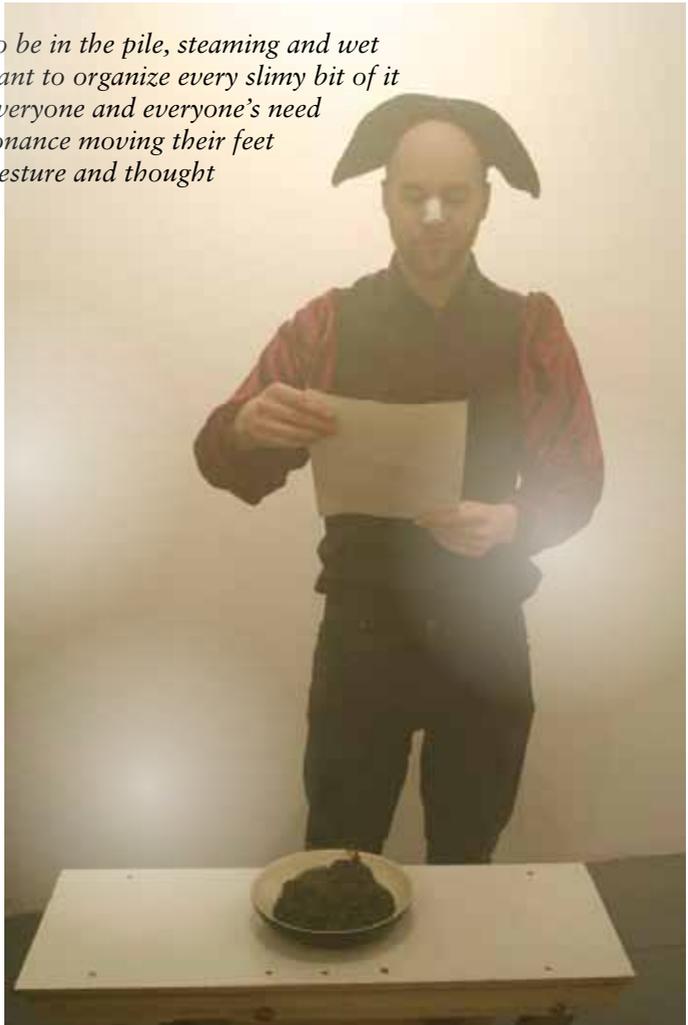
*/So the pile can spread over and through the plane
/Travelling, vibrating, hovering over moving waters and flat domain
 /Everywhere our skulls are as entangled strings - all tight
 /And sending waves, words, madly, in flickering lights
 //Halfway between gesture and thought*

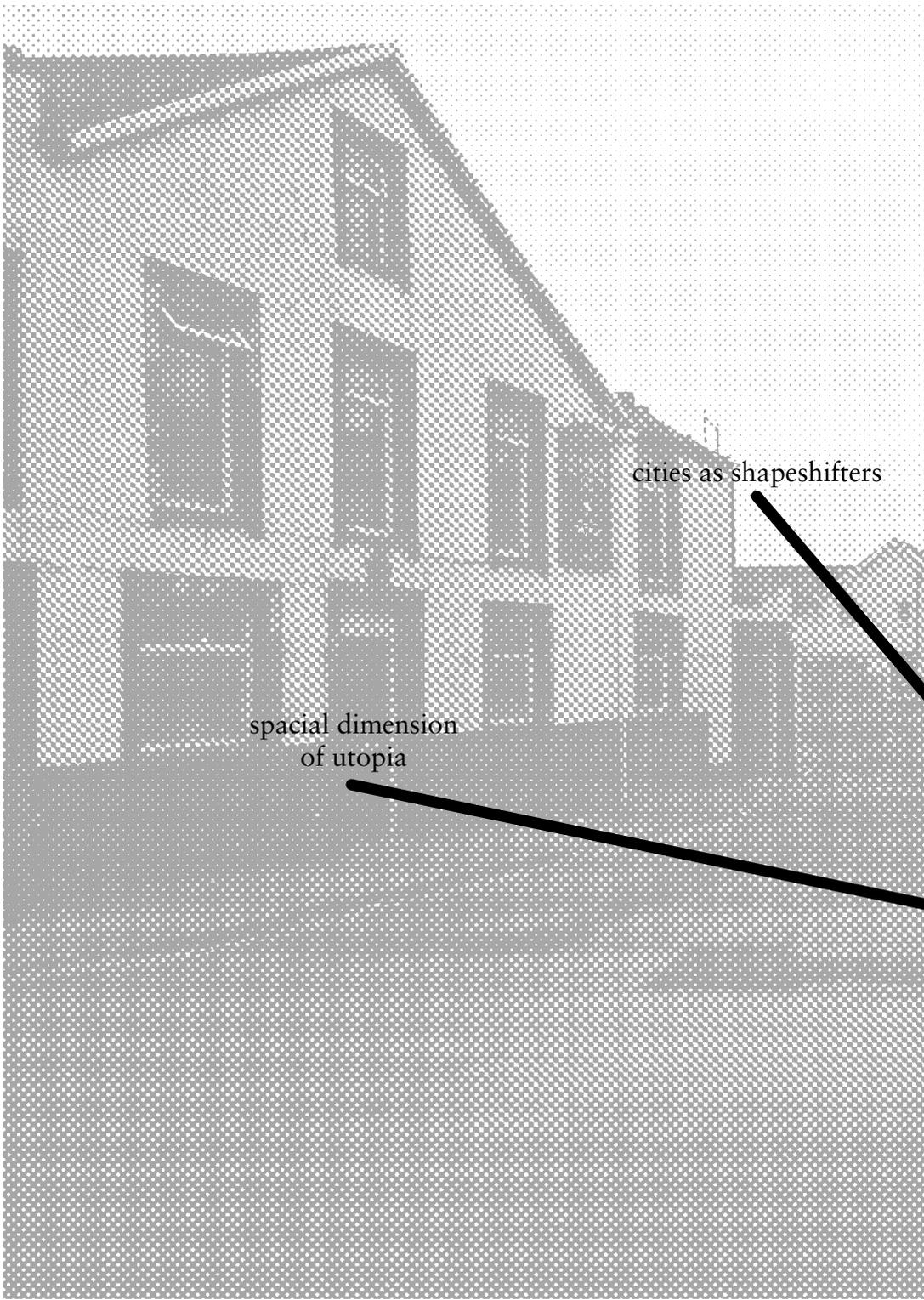
- is a movement, not a placement*
- is a continuous walk with no direction*
- is a word and a throat and slimy balls*
- producing, travelling entities with no termination*
- that are therefore always home, always away*
- halfway between gesture and thought*

*/The idea is a sound that resonates in my bones
/Fills the space between the bodies of my organs
/In every sense: practical and theoretical moves
/Cannot act for me and I can only resonate
//Halfway between gesture and thought*

*/Skulls sound and resonance spread in the room
/Like a pile of algae spreading steam
/Releasing in the air their sounds of activity
/Disorganized, long, thin, sticky strings of life
//Halfway between gesture and thought*

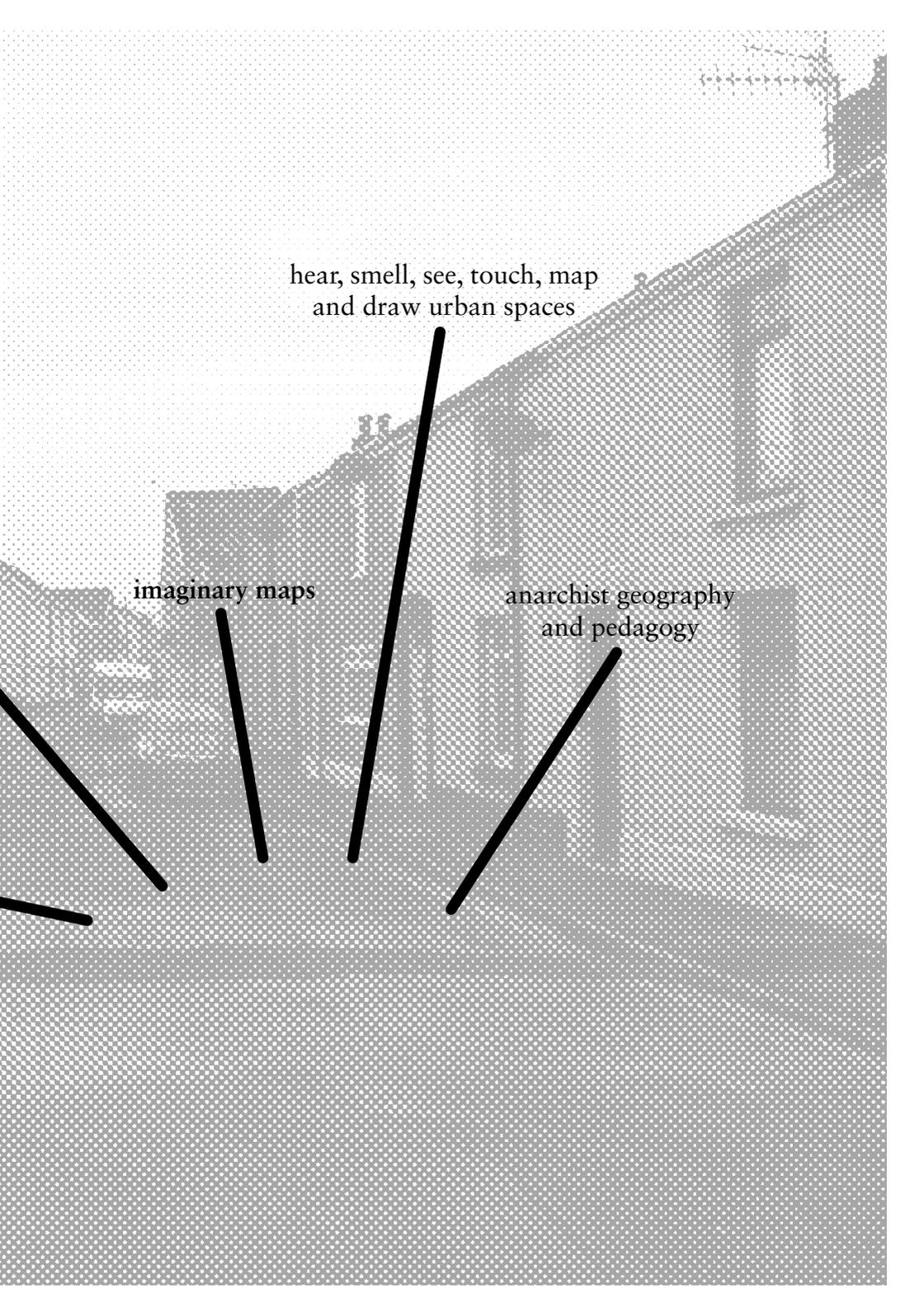
*/Those who get to be in the pile, steaming and wet
/Will want to organize every slimy bit of it
/To make good for everyone and everyone's need
/But everyone has a resonance moving their feet
//Halfway between gesture and thought*





cities as shapeshifters

spacial dimension
of utopia



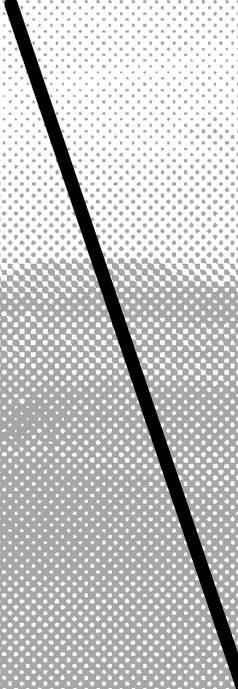
hear, smell, see, touch, map
and draw urban spaces

imaginary maps

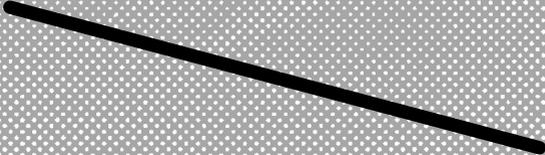
anarchist geography
and pedagogy

1. Play is free, is in fact freedom.
2. Play is not “ordinary” or “real” life.
3. Play is distinct from “ordinary” life both as to locality and duration.
4. Play creates order, is order. Play demands order absolute and supreme.
5. Play is connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it.

queer phenomonology



safe house
empowering to speak



collective reading & movements
theory and practise tied together

the length of an arm is
how far knowledge goes
a.k.a.
breaking down thick philo-
sophical concepts

FUTURE. FRONT. NOVUM.

UTOPIAN ONTOLOGY

UTOPIA GATHERING, ATB, SWANSE

ERNST BLOCH'S
'Principle of Hope'

UTOPIA

'a venturing beyond becoming conscious'
'expectant emotion' (hope)
'anticipatory consciousness'

NOT-YET-CONSCIOUS
NOT-YET-BECOME

-wishing
wishing-urging
(Desire)

self-preservation

DRIVE

receptivity blocked
socio-economic
barrier to vision
despair
anxiety/fear
deprivation
hunger
'negative expectant
emotions'

CAPITAL-

- reification
- treadmill effect
- fixity

CRITICISM OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

unconscious (dreams)
of the past:

daydreams
as 'forwarddream'
'forwarddawning'

origins - atavistic
causes - archetypes

status quo

Been-ness - The manifest.
'uninterested mistrust'

Affe
transi

MO

Historical vacuoles - historical aporia
unassignable leakage
(the not-yet-realised) - real
re-emergence

A

unbecome future — OPEN UP A FRONT

The objectively Real possible

'no drive object'

we are not yet

ACTIVE EXPECTATION
revolutionary interest
"self-preservation as self-extension"

militant optimism

THE CAN-BE

reality not fixed

reality expanded to include real possibility

new Drives
stochasticity of
drives, changeable

Production of New fermenting

malleable
historically variable
metamorphosis

hope

produce

incubation — intensive propensity
inspiration — sudden insight of NYC
explication — makes the NYC

'space of receptivity'

'space of concrete anticipation'
FRONT

maintain openness

'feelings not yet settled'
act — 'semi immediate feeling of self'
five emotion — emotional intending
form of knowledge

hope + utopian opening

Transmission

imprint of the non-categorisable

holes!

possibility

WITTIG — le genre lier's.

- speculative fiction
 - Afro futurism (music)
 - surrealism (crevel poem)
 - affective class
 - musicality
 - utopian architecture (SI)
 - de-categorizing (Blach's expansion 'real')
- = 'The can-be'

ATB Wales is: Kristian Byskov, Barnaby Dicker,
Pia Eikaas, Owen Griffiths, Martin Haufe, Benny
Henningsen, Margarita del Carmen, Anna Ørberg,
Vladas Suncovas & Fern C. Thomas

ATB projects

2012 'research - Berlin

2013 please dont feed the trolls - Leipzig

2013 island of open process - Brussels

2015 collective misunderstandings - Swansea

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Cyngor Celfyddydol Cymru
Arts Council of Wales



ATB is a multidisciplinary collective with members from Germany, Denmark, Norway, Lithuania, Chile and Wales. They share common interests in collectivity, urban space, performance, the politics of art and its emancipatory potential. islandofopenprocess.net

Art's Birthday Wales is a loose collective of artists that works in partnership with galleries, organisations, groups and individuals to create and curate collaborative and participatory events, exhibitions and projects that contribute to the annual international Art's Birthday celebrations. An Austerity Disco was held at Elysium Gallery, Swansea, as a companion event to Collective Misunderstandings. Artsbirthdaywales.tumblr.com

Forever Academy is a Swansea based DIY style artists network supporting the ongoing developing of creative practices. It functions as a framework for conversations, workshops, gatherings and talks. Forever Academy is led by Owen Griffiths and Fern Thomas and has a developing alumni. Foreveracademy.org



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